

and acquaintances, one or other of my alternatives should be acted upon. Either the members of the Inns of Court should be admitted by virtue of their membership, or a ticket should be sent to one who has not the honour of being a friend or acquaintance of your lordship's—to wit, to me. As I have said before, I deny the right of anyone to 'reserved' seats in a Court of Justice. A member of my inn, in palliation, said that the tickets were not sold, but granted gratis to all applicants. I hope that is so. Armed with a ticket of admittance I hope to be able to gain an entry, taking my chance with others similarly armed. Supposing the possessor of a ticket issued before the trial commenced is absent, his seat should be kept vacant. If he is late, an earlier ticketholder should occupy the space allotted to him when present. On these grounds I respectfully ask your lordship to issue tickets over and above those already issued, so that there should be no appearance of the Court being reserved for a few personal friends.

Your obedient servant,

L. TALLIEN A. M'VANE.

To the Right Hon. J. D. Lord Coleridge.

1 Sussex Square, W. : June 6, 1891.

SIR,—I have hesitated whether to take any notice of your letter; but it has become the custom to assume that anyone has a right to accuse any other person of anything, and that if that other is not at the trouble of replying to the accusation he must be taken to admit its truth. It is very inconvenient just now to spend valuable time in replying to you; but in such a matter as the public administration of justice it is perhaps better to submit to the inconvenience.

No one except the sovereign and the judges has any right upon the bench; but it has been the immemorial custom for the judges to extend the courtesy of a seat there to peers, Privy Councillors, and any other persons whom they may choose to invite. I speak from a personal recollection of more than fifty years. It is a discretion I shall exercise as my illustrious predecessors have exercised it, when and as I think fit, and with which, except by Parliament, I shall permit no interference.

The statement as to my wife, which you profess to have heard from 'a Templar,' is absolutely untrue. It seems that some Templars can be like other men—inaccurate—and that other Templars can forget what is usually considered due to a lady. It is equally untrue that the bench has been filled by my personal friends. My wife has had at her disposal three seats, and three seats only, including her own. The majority of persons on the bench have been unknown to me, even by sight, but they have been persons to whom, for one reason or another, it seemed proper to grant the privilege. Exactly the same observations apply to my own small gallery and to a portion of the gallery opposite the bench. The rest of that gallery and the whole of the body of the Court has been absolutely free, but I have given strict orders to prevent overcrowding, so that the quiet and orderly trial of the cause shall be secured; with the further directions that the utmost available space shall be given to members of the bar in costume; and that the reporters for the press, who keep the public informed of the proceedings in Court, shall be able to perform their important duty, as far as possible, in ease and comfort.

I believe that my orders have not been wholly ineffectual, and they will certainly be continued. When the Court is full my orders are to exclude everyone. There are thousands, I daresay, who would like to hear the trial of an interesting cause, but it is, in my opinion, far more important that those who do hear it should be comfortable (so far as comfort is possible in the Royal Courts of Justice), and therefore quiet and orderly, than that a few more persons—it may be 100—should hear it at the expense of the comfort, the quiet, and the order of the whole audience. I have acted before now on these views; and shall certainly act on them now and whenever it may be my fate to preside at the trial of a case which excites public interest. I can make no alteration in your favour.

As the person you refer to as 'a Templar' and yourself may perhaps repeat your mistakes, I shall send your letter and my answer to the newspapers.

I am, Sir, Your obedient, humble servant,

COLERIDGE.

L. T. A. M'Vane, Esq.